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# AMERICANS *of German Origin* AND THE WAR

*By*  
OTTO H. KAHN



*Extracts from an address before  
The Merchants Association of New York  
at its Liberty Loan Meeting  
June 1, 1917*



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*of German Origin*  
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WE HAVE MET to-day in pursuance of a high purpose, a purpose which at this fateful moment is one and the same wherever, throughout the world, the language of free men is spoken and understood.

It is the purpose of a common determination to fight and to bear

and to dare everything and never to cease nor rest until the accursed thing which has brought upon the world the unutterable calamity, the devil's visitation of this appalling war, is destroyed beyond all possibility of resurrection.

That accursed thing is not a nation, but an evil spirit, a spirit which has made the government possessed by it and executing its abhorrent and bloody bidding an abomination in the sight of God and men.

What we are now contending for by the side of our splendidly

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brave and sorely tried Allies, after infinite forbearance, after delay which many of us found it hard to bear, are the things which are amongst the highest and most cherished that the civilized world has attained through the toil, sacrifices and suffering of its best in the course of many centuries.

They are the things without which darkness would fall upon hope, and life would become intolerable.

They are the things of humanity, liberty, justice and mercy, for which the best men amongst all

the nations—including the German nation—have fought and bled these many generations past, which were the ideals of Luther, Goethe, Schiller, Kant, and a host of others who had made the name of Germany great and beloved until fanatical Prussianism run amuck came to make its deeds a by-word and a hissing.

This appalling conflict which has been drenching the world with blood is not a mere fight of one or more peoples against one or more other peoples.

It goes far deeper.



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It sharply divides the soul and conscience of the world.

It transcends vastly the bounds of racial allegiance.

It is ethically fundamental.

In determining one's attitude towards it, the time has gone by—if it ever was—when race and blood and inherited affiliations were permitted to count.

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*AMERICANS*                      *of German*

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**A** CENTURY and a half ago Americans of English birth rose to free this country from the oppression of the rulers of England. To-day Americans of German birth are called upon to rise, together with their fellow-citizens of all races, to free not only this country but the whole world from the oppression of the rulers of Germany, an oppression far less capable of being endured and of far graver portent.

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Speaking as one born of German parents, I do not hesitate to state it as my deep conviction that *the greatest service which men of German birth or antecedents can render to the country of their origin* is to proclaim, and to stand up for those great and fine ideals and national qualities and traditions which they inherited from their ancestors, and *to set their faces like flint against the monstrous doctrines and acts of a rulership which have robbed them of the Germany which they loved and in which they took just pride, the Germany which had the good will,*

*AMERICANS of German*

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respect and admiration of the entire world.

I do not hesitate to state it as my solemn conviction *that the more unmistakably and wholeheartedly Americans of German origin throw themselves into the struggle which this country has entered in order to rescue Germany, no less than America and the rest of the world* from those sinister forces that are, in President Wilson's language, the enemy of all mankind, the better they protect and serve the repute of the old German name and the true advantage of the German people.

**G**ENTLEMEN, I measure my words. They are borne out all too emphatically by the hideous eloquence of deeds which have appalled the conscience of the civilized world. They are borne out by numberless expressions, written and spoken, of German professors employed by the State to teach its youth.

The burden of that teaching is that might makes right, and that the German nation has been chosen

to exercise morally, mentally and actually, the over-lordship of the world and must and will accomplish that task and that destiny whatever the cost in bloodshed, misery and ruin.

The spirit of that teaching, in its intolerance, its mixture of sanctimoniousness and covetousness and its self-righteous assumption of a world-improving mission, is closely akin to the spirit from which were bred the religious wars of the past through the long and dark years when Protestants and Catholics killed one another and devastated Europe.

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I speak in sorrow, for I am speaking of the country of my origin and I have not forgotten what I owe to it.

I speak in bitter disappointment, for I am thinking of the Germany of former days, the Germany which has contributed its full share to the store of the world's imperishable assets and which, in not a few fields of human endeavor and achievement held the leading place among the nations of the earth.

And I speak in the firm faith that, after its people shall have

shaken off and made atonement for the dreadful spell which an evil fate has cast upon them, that former Germany is bound to arise again and, in due course of time, will again deserve and attain the good-will and the high respect of the world and the affectionate loyalty of all those of German blood in foreign lands.

*But I know that neither Germany nor this country nor the rest of the world can return to happiness and peace and fruitful labor until it shall have been made manifest, bitterly and unmistakably manifest,*



*to the rulers who bear the blood-guilt for this wanton war and to their misinformed and misguided peoples that the spirit which unchained it cannot prevail, that the hateful doctrines and methods in pursuance of which and in compliance with which it is conducted are rejected with abhorrence by the civilized world, and that the over-weening ambitions which it was meant to serve can never be achieved.*

*The fight for civilization which we all fondly believed had been won many years ago must be fought over again. In this sacred struggle it is*

*AMERICANS                      of German*

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*now our privilege to take no mean  
part, and our glory to bring sac-  
rifices.*

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**O**UR one and supreme job, the one purpose to which all others must give way, is to bring this war to a successful conclusion. One of the means toward that end is to make the Liberty Loan a veritable triumph, an overwhelming expression of our gigantic economic strength.

To accomplish that, let each one of us feel himself personally responsible, let each one of us work as if our life depended on the

result. And, in a very real sense, does not our national life and our individual life depend on the outcome of this war?

Would life be tolerable if the power of Prussianism, run mad and murderous, held the world by the throat, if the primacy of the earth belonged to a government steeped in the doctrines of a barbarous past and supported by a ruling cast which preaches the deification of sheer might, which despises liberty, hates democracy and would destroy both if it could?

To that spirit and to those doc-

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trines, we, citizens of America and servants, as such, of humanity, will oppose our solemn and unshakable resolution "to make the world safe for democracy," and we will say, with a clear conscience, in the noble words which more than five hundred years ago were uttered by the Parliament of Scotland:

*"It is not for glory, or for riches,  
or for honor that we fight, but  
for liberty alone which no good  
man loses but with his life."*















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